

April 28, 2009

Dear Care Provider:

SUBJECT: PROTECTING YOURSELF AGAINST THE SWINE FLU

As you are all aware, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention has reported recent outbreaks of the Swine Flu virus in California, and throughout the United States.

The California Department of Social Services is working with the California Department of Public Health regarding universal health precautions that you can take to prevent everyone in your facility or school from catching or spreading the virus. As partners with the Community Care Licensing Division in protecting clients in care, the following general swine flu information will assist you in ensuring that the risk to clients in licensed residential facilities is diminished. We encourage you to visit the website links provided for additional information.

What is swine flu?

Swine Influenza (swine flu) is a respiratory disease of pigs caused by Type A influenza viruses that causes regular outbreaks in pigs. People do not normally get swine flu, but human infections can and do happen. Swine flu viruses have been reported to spread from person-to-person, but in the past, this transmission was limited and not sustained beyond three people.

What can I do to protect myself from getting sick?

There is no vaccine available right now to protect against swine flu. There are everyday actions that can help prevent the spread of germs that cause respiratory illnesses like influenza. Take these everyday steps to protect your health:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you get sick with influenza, CDC recommends that you stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.

- What is the best way to keep from spreading the virus through coughing or sneezing?

If you are sick, limit your contact with other people as much as possible. Do not go to work or school if ill. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. It may prevent those around you from getting sick. Put your used tissue in the waste basket. Cover your cough or sneeze if you do not have a tissue. Then, clean your hands, and do so every time you cough or sneeze.

What should I do if I get sick?

If you live in areas where swine influenza cases have been identified and become ill with influenza-like symptoms, including fever, body aches, runny nose, sore throat, nausea, or vomiting or diarrhea, you may want to contact their health care provider, particularly if you are worried about your symptoms. Your health care provider will determine whether influenza testing or treatment is needed.

In children, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough
- Fever with a rash In adults, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include: Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting

What should I do if a client gets sick at my facility?

As a licensee, you are expected to follow the regulations and ensure that client's medical needs are addressed. This may mean that you will have to take additional precautions to ensure that clients are not exposed and that you have sufficient staff on duty. If you suspect that your client is ill with the flu, you should contact the client's health care professional. You should also report any outbreak or incident of the swine flu to your licensing program analyst and to the local health department. You can also share this letter with the client's family members to provide them with additional information.

Can I get swine influenza from eating or preparing pork?

No. Swine influenza viruses are not spread by food. You cannot get swine influenza from eating pork or pork products. Eating properly handled and cooked pork products is safe.

For these and other Swine Flu related information, please visit the following websites:

- The Center for Disease Control and Prevention at: http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/general_info.htm
- The US Department of Health and Human Services at: <http://www.hhs.gov/>
- The California Department of Public Health at: <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Pages/SwineInfluenza.aspx>

Sincerely,

Original signed by Jo Frederick

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